THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF CIVIL AVIATION (SHRI PRAFUL PATEL): (a) and (b) Due to visibility falling below operating minima during fog, many a time flights get delayed/cancelled with consequential losses. Some airlines do not maintain details related to delays due to 'landing restrictions' or late clearance for take off. It is, therefore, not possible to compute loss on this count.

(c) In accordance with ICAO guidelines, Airports Authority of India (AAI) has already installed CAT III B ILS at IGI airport, New Delhi, which permits operation of aircraft up to Runway Visual Range [RVR] of 50 meters which can be used by airlines with certified pilots. All airlines are directed/encouraged to plan their operations with aircrafts and pilots capable of operating under such low visibility conditions. In addition, Instrument Landing Systems (ILS) have also been installed at 42 other airports to enable aircraft operation in low visibility conditions.

(d) The passengers are informed by the airlines in advance about rescheduling of flights due to fog. In case of cancellations, passengers are given option to either take refund or avail next available flight. Light refreshments are provided to the passengers in case of delays beyond two hours.

Infrastructural facilities at minor airports

115. DR. K. MALAISAMY: Will the Minister of CIVIL AVIATION be pleased to state:

(a) whether there is any move to develop the infrastructural facilities at minor airports;

(b) if so, the details thereof and the financial allocations for them with the time-frame for execution of the project;

(c) the status of airports at Uchipuli in Ramanathapuram District, Tamil Nadu; and

(d) whether it is not a fact that Uchipuli is a most backward place but a vital link and very much closer to Rameswaram and Sri Lanka and deserving to attain priority and importance in taking up?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF CIVIL AVIATION (SHRI PRAFUL PATEL): (a) Yes, Sir. AAI has undertaken upgradation and modernization of 35 non-metro airports in the country. In addition, 13 more airports have also been taken up for upgradation.

(b) Runway expansion/Restrengthening works has been undertaken at Vijaywada, Dibrugarh, Silchar, Kullu, Jammu, Bhopal, Khajuraho, Aurangabad, Gondia, Puducherry, Amritsar, Udaipur, Madurai, Trichy, Agartala, Varanasi, Dehradun, Pantnagar and Cooch Behar airports while apron expansion works have been undertaken at Port Blair, Vijayawada, Dibrugarh, Silchar, Ranchi, Vadodra, Surat, Gagal, Kullu, Jammu, Raipur, Khajuraho, Bhopal, Aurangabad, Akola, Belgaum, Gondia, Imphal, Dimapur, Hubli, Puducherry, Amritsar, Udaipur, Madurai, Trichy, Agartala, Varanasi, Agra, Dehradun and Cooch Behar airports. Terminal Building expansion/construction works have been undertaken at Chandigarh, Ranchi, Vadodra, Rajkot, Kullu, Jammu, Raipur, Agatti, Bhopal, Khajuraho, Aurangabad, Gondia, Imphal, Amritsar, Udaipur, Madurai, Trichy, Varanasi, Dehradun, Pantnagar and Cooch Behar airports.

The infrastructure both on the air side and city side for the above non-metro airports is to be developed in a phased manner. AAI has made a provision of Rs.6,443 crores for the development of non-metro airports during the XI Five Year Plan period.

(c) and (d) Ramnad airfield at Uchipuli belongs to Indian Navy. There is no request from any Scheduled Airline to have commercial operations from this airfield. AAI, therefore, have, presently, no plans to develop a Civil Enclave for commercial civil operations at this airfield. Further, adequate air connectivity is available in this region through Madurai, Tiruchirapalli and Tuticorin airports having scheduled operations.

User development fee at Delhi Airports

116. SHRI B.K. HARIPRASAD: Will the Minister of CIVIL AVIATION be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Bangalore Airport Authority has enforced an arbitrary levy of User Development Fee from 16th January, 2009 on all outbound travellers;

(b) if so, whether a request from Delhi International Airport Authority seeking Government's permission to impose a similar levy on all outbound passengers from Delhi, is under the consideration of Government;

(c) whether the Ministry of Law had earlier ruled that the Concession Agreement between Government and the successful bidders for Delhi and Bangalore airports did not permit imposition of such a levy; and

(d) if so, the reasons and the rationale behind the change in Government's policy?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF CIVIL AVIATION (SHRI PRAFUL PATEL): (a) As per Article 10.2 and Schedule 6 of Concession Agreement entered into with Bangalore International Airport Limited (BIAL) by Government of India (GoI), BIAL is allowed to charge User Development Fee (UDF) to meet the revenue gap, if any, with prior approval of the GoI. In terms thereof, GoI have approved on an ad-hoc basis, levy of UDF @ Rs.260/- (inclusive all taxes) per domestic embarking passengers with effect from 16.01.2009.

(b) to (d) IGI Airport, New Delhi has been restructured through joint venture route and leased to the Joint Venture Company M/s Delhi International Airport Pvt. Ltd (DIAL) under Section 12A of the Airports Authority of India (AAI) Act 1994. DIAL has prepared a Master Plan for modernisation of the airport to world class standards, well in time for Commonwealth Games 2010. The Master Plan is under implementation at the presently estimated cost of Rs.8975 crores. Keeping in view the paramount importance of completing the project in time for the Commonwealth Games, the Government have, in terms of Section 22A of the AAI Act 1994, approved, purely on an ad-hoc basis, the levy of Development Fee @ Rs.1300/- per departing international passenger and @ Rs.200/- per departing domestic passenger with effect from 01.03.2009, for a period of 36 months, to bridge the funding gap of Rs.1827 crores. The levy is subject to review after six months. Funds collected through the levy can be utilised only for the construction of such aeronautical assets which will be transferred by DIAL to AAI upon completion of lease period. In this process, the Ministry of Law and Justice has been appropriately consulted.

Flight services at Pithoragarh

†117. SHRI BHAGAT SINGH KOSHYARI: Will the Minister of CIVIL AVIATION be pleased to state:

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†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi